

Changing mindsets to move forward: *supportive policy*

The available literature and the FAO/University of Bologna 2006 e-mail conference participants conclude that there is the urgent need for supportive policies and interventions that link informal sector activities, including food safety improvements, with efforts to alleviate poverty. In line with local social and cultural contexts, local and national authorities should implement rules (that often already exist) that facilitate access to IFS and the adoption of safer practical productive techniques, thus bringing the sector toward standardization. This often needs the help of external agencies. An education programme must also be undertaken to support efforts to facilitate IFS projects and/or the activities of small entrepreneurs. This will improve market functioning for food commodities and address food safety issues. Different roles need to be assigned to international, national and local institutions to adopt the best supporting measures (Argenti, François and Mouawad, 2003). In cases where certain groups, including ethnic groups, dominate markets, the state can support new associations and encourage the establishment of federations. Cebu City, Philippines, is a notable example of a city that has succeeded in this approach. Research shows that it is possible for authorities to work with the sector successfully.



In conclusion, the IFS exists in all countries of the world. It has proved its tenacity by continuing to flourish, even when illegal or state-oppressed. It continues to offer autonomy and incomes to a wide variety of people and families in periods of urbanization and industrialization, as well as in economic crisis and downturn. It is thus unlikely to disappear. The convenience of purchasing food from informal vendors is also appreciated by many consumers, including the urban poor, office workers and tourists. The sector promises to contribute to poverty reduction and the creation of safer, livelier cities throughout the world according to how policies will be drafted and implemented in various social and cultural contexts.

Authorities, and local authorities in particular, should consider informal agents as partners in local development initiatives. They should implement policies and programmes aimed at creating adequate conditions for informal sector activities to be efficiently undertaken while minimising risks to society.





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List of tables, figures and maps

Tables

Table 1. Informal employment among total active population of selected cities	3
Table 2. Importance of street food in selected cities	8
Table 3. Contribution of urban agricultural production to urban employment, income and food expense savings in selected cities and countries, 1990s	12
Table 4. Estimated increase in traffic in 2012 due to food transport in selected cities	14
Table 5. Selected initiatives in support of the informal food sector	24

Figures

Figure 1. Urbanization trends by region	4
Figure 2. Importance of the informal sector in urban food supply and distribution activities in periods of crisis and economic growth	5
Figure 3. Main type of work done by children aged 5-17, Uganda	18

Map

Map 1. Location of street markets in Santiago de Chile, Chile	11
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Acronyms

EAP	Economically Active Population
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IFS	Informal Food Sector
ILO	International Labour Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRI	Natural Resources Institute
UN	United Nations
UN HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing

Photo captions

- page iii: **Ethiopia**, Addis Ababa: sweeping in retail market
- page 1: **Viet Nam**, Hanoi: selling fruits and vegetables in the street
- page 2: **Cape Verde**, Praia: women selling vegetables
- page 3: **Pakistan**, Lahore: fruits and vegetables municipal market
- page 3: **Thailand**, Bangkok: street food seller
- page 4: **Pakistan**, Lahore: fruits and vegetables market
- page 5: **Pakistan**, Northern Area: children selling bags in a street market
- page 5: **Mexico**, Mexico City: municipal police attacking informal street vendors
- page 6: **Philippines**, Manila: woman selling fish
- page 7: **Pakistan**, Lahore: sale of parts of animal on the street
- page 8: **Pakistan**, Lahore: transport of meat from slaughterhouse to retail shop
- page 9: **Brazil**, São Paulo: unloading wooden boxes in vegetable market
- page 10: **Viet Nam**, Hanoi: selling fruits and vegetables in the street
- page 11: **Pakistan**, Islamabad: spices retailer
- page 12: **Syrian Arab Republic**, Damascus: urban agriculture
- page 13: **Philippines**, Manila: street food seller
- page 14: **Pakistan**, Lahore: manual transport of food in retail market
- page 15: **Pakistan**, Islamabad: traditional transport in market
- page 16: **Ethiopia**, Addis Ababa: street vegetables seller
- page 17: **Pakistan**, Lahore: poultry slaughterhouse and market
- page 17: **Pakistan**, Northern Area: children selling meat
- page 18: **Pakistan**, Islamabad: young boy selling fruits and vegetables at retail market
- page 19: **Pakistan**, Lahore: retail market
- page 20: **Pakistan**, Lahore: woman selling onions
- page 20: **Pakistan**, Lahore: child searching for food in market rubbish
- page 21: **Lebanon**, Beirut: fruit street seller
- page 22: **Pakistan**, Lahore: retail market
- page 24: **Ethiopia**, Addis Ababa: retailer counting money
- page 25: **Syrian Arab Republic**, Damascus: fruit retailing
- page 26: **Ethiopia**, Addis Ababa: street vegetables sellers
- page 27: **Georgia**, Tbilisi: retailer in central market
- page 28: **Pakistan**, Lahore: paper bags retailer
- page 29: **Mexico**, Mexico City: Tianguis market
- page 30: **Pakistan**, Lahore: vegetables market

